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The role of background language(s)"

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The acquisition of the Dutch quantitative pronoun ER: the role of background language(s)



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Introduction

This study looks at **transfer** from **L1 French** and **L1 English** to the **L2 Dutch**. We specifically look at the ability to judge and imitate morpho-syntactic and semantic structures with the quantitative pronoun ER.

Dutch	French	English
↓ <u>Syntax</u> Ik lees ER drie *Ik lees drie	↓ <i>presence vs absence</i> J' EN lis trois *Je lis trois	↓ I read three I read three
↓ <u>Semantics</u> Ik lees ER een heleboel *Ik lees ER de helft	↓ <i>indefiniteness vs definiteness</i> J' EN lis un grand nombre J' EN lis la moitié	↓ I read many I read half
↓ <u>Semantics</u> Ik lees ER enkele *Ik lees ER sommige	↓ <i>non-presuppositionality vs presuppositionality</i> J' EN lis quelques-uns J' EN lis certains	↓ I read some I read some

Dutch and French have a quantitative pronoun that accompanies a complex NP modified by a cardinal numeral or weak quantifier. The licensing conditions of these pronouns (Dutch: ER, French: EN) differ partially (e.g. Bennis, 1986; Sleeman, 1996). English does not have a quantitative pronoun.



Predictions

Based on Full Transfer/Full Access, Schwartz & Sprouse (1994)

	Dutch	L1 French	L1 English
Syntax	✓ presence ✗ absence	positive positive	negative positive
Semantics	✓ indefiniteness ✗ definiteness	positive negative	negative positive
Semantics	✓ non-presuppositionality ✗ presuppositionality	positive negative	negative positive

Materials

- Grammaticality Judgement Task
3 experimental conditions (N=30), 15 fillers
- Sentence Imitation Task
3 experimental conditions (N=12), 8 fillers
- Dutch Vocabulary Task, Digit Span, Questionnaire

Participants

L1 French (N=25), highly advanced, level > B2
L1 English (N=25), highly advanced, level > B2
L1 Dutch (N=25)

Average years of exposure: L1 French (22;1)
L1 English (19;7)



Comparison results French-Dutch and English-Dutch

Linear models in R

SI	Dutch	L1 French	L1 English
Syntax	✓ (presence)	positive	negative
	✗ (absence)	positive	positive
Semantics	✓ (indefiniteness)	positive	negative
	✗ (definiteness)	negative	positive
Semantics	✓ (non-presuppositionality)	positive	negative
	✗ (presuppositionality)	negative	positive
		0/6 predictions confirmed	5/6 predictions confirmed

In the SI the L1 English speakers behaved as we expected, however the L1 French speakers did not: apparently they behave just like the L1 English speakers.

GJT	Dutch	L1 French	L1 English
Syntax	✓ (presence)	positive	negative
	✗ (absence)	positive	positive
Semantics	✓ (indefiniteness)	positive	negative
	✗ (definiteness)	negative	positive
Semantics	✓ (non-presuppositionality)	positive	negative
	✗ (presuppositionality)	negative	positive
		5/6 predictions confirmed	2/6 predictions confirmed

In the GJT the L1 French seems to have an influence on L2 Dutch, like we expected, BUT a comparison between the L1 French and the L1 English speakers also shows that the L2 French speakers behave exactly the same as the L1 English speakers.

Comparison results French-English

GJT	Dutch	L1 French	L1 English
Syntax	✓ presence ✗ absence	no difference no difference	
Semantics	✓ indefiniteness	no difference	
	✗ definiteness	no difference	
	✓ non-presuppositionality	no difference	
	✗ presuppositionality	no difference	

Discussion

Our predictions were based on Dutch being the L2 for both groups. However, all of the L1 French participants speak English too, and since all participants live in The Netherlands they come into contact with English on a regular basis. This leads to the idea that Dutch is in fact their L3.

By considering Dutch as an L3 for the L1 French group, we implemented the L2 Status Factor (Bardel and Falk 2007) that claims that the L2 acts as a filter, thereby blocking transfer from the L1 at the syntactic level. Thus, the L2 might have a bigger impact on learning the L3 than the L1. In that case we do not expect to find significant differences between the L1 French and the L1 English groups.

No significant difference between the L1 French and L1 English groups have been found in the GJT, thereby confirming the L2 Status Factor.



Conclusion

Our goal was to look at the role of L1 French and L1 English on the L2 acquisition of the Dutch quantitative pronoun ER. However, we found that for the L1 English group Dutch is considered the 'real L2', and for the L1 French group English should be considered the L2 and Dutch the L3, thereby confirming the L2 Status Factor.



References and Acknowledgements

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